MASS. ED51.2:D49

UMASS/AMHERST
312066 0273 8073 5

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

(Revised, November 1986)

RECEIVED
AUG 28 1989
DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

Massachusetts Department of Education
Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Education
Community Education Office

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr. James F. Crain, Gloucester, *Chairperson*
Rev. Paul V. Garrity, Lowell, *Vice Chairperson*

Ms. Milca R. Gonzalez, Shrewsbury
Mr. James R. Grande, Hanover
Mr. Joseph E. Killory, Sandwich
Mr. Sol Kolack, Newton
Mrs. Anne S. Larkin, Bedford
Mrs. Loretta L. Roach, Boston
Mr. Joseph C. Savery, Lee
Mr. Sam H. Silverstein, Lincoln
Ms. Mary Ellen Smith, Boston
Mrs. Mary C. Wright, Falmouth

Mr. Harold Raynolds, Jr., *Commissioner of Education, Secretary*

Mr. Franklyn G. Jenifer, *Chancellor,* Board of Regents, Ex Officio

Division of Curriculum and Instruction
James Case, *Associate Commissioner*

Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services
Kathleen Atkinson, *Director*
Susan Freedman, *Coordinator of Community Education*

Produced by the Bureau of Operational Support
Cecilia M. DiBella, *Director*
Susan Gardner, *Publications/Communications Coordinator*
Susan M. Stille, *Typographist*
Rocco LoRusso and Eleanor Rankins, *Photocopier Technicians*

The Massachusetts Department of Education insures equal employment/educational opportunities/affirmative action regardless of race, color, creed, national origin or sex, in compliance with Title VI and Title IX, or handicap, in compliance with section 504.

Publication #14667—36—3500—12-86 Approved by Daniel D. Carter, *State Purchasing Agent.*

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL (Revised Edition)

Produced by
Massachusetts Department of Education
Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services
Kathleen Atkinson, Director

Developed by
Susan Freedman, Coordinator of Community Education
Terry Grobe, Community Education Consultant

Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, Massachusetts 02169
(617) 770-7580

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction.....1

Section I
Benefits of a School Improvement Council 3

Section II
Chapter 188 School Improvement Fund Grants and
School Improvement Councils 5

Section III
Organizing a School Improvement Council.....9

Section IV
The Planning Process.....13

Section V
Involving the Community.....17

Section VI
Evaluation.....19

Bibliography.....23

Appendix A
An Act Improving the Public Schools of the Commonwealth
Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985 as Amended by Chapter 414
of the Acts of 1986.....25

Appendix B
Effective Meeting Checklist.....29

Appendix C
Sample Needs Assessment.....31

Appendix D
Sample Proposal Application Form.....33

Appendix E
Council Evaluation Form.....35

Appendix F
School Improvement Council Narrative Report.....37

INTRODUCTION

School Improvement Councils in Massachusetts were created as a result of the passage of the Public School Improvement Act, Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985. This comprehensive state legislation is the first of its kind in over a decade and is designed to stimulate educational improvement across the Commonwealth. Among its many provisions, the statute contains five formula and nine discretionary grant programs which provide incentives for schools to upgrade materials, programs, services, and staff training. School Improvement. Councils are established by schools that want to take advantage of the School Improvement Fund, one of the five formula grant programs. The purpose of these School Improvement Councils is to increase citizen participation in school improvment efforts.

Citizen participation in educational decision making is not a new concept. The social reform movement of the 1960's resulted in the creation of programs such as Head Start and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which mandated parent participation in program decision making. State initiatives followed the federal trend and advisory councils were created to provide direction for programs such as Special and Occupational Education. By 1980 three states - California, Florida, and South Carolina - had legislation which established school councils. In California, for example, state grants were given to schools that developed a school improvement plan and formed a school site council.

In Massachusetts many local initiatives preceded passage of Chapter 188. In Boston, projects such as the School Improvement Program, the Boston Compact, and School-Based Management have demonstrated the effectiveness of citizen

participation in school planning. In Lowell, Worcester, and Springfield, councils have been established in magnet schools under guidelines for Chapter 636 funded programs.

With the passage of the Public School Reform Act, Massachusetts has become the fourth state to enact specific school council legislation. Although these councils are optional, they provide significant opportunities for schools to broaden their decision making base, increase resources for school improvement, and expand support for school programs within the local community.

This handbook has been written in six sections designed to assist schools in organizing and managing an effective School Improvement Council:

Section I describes the benefits of a School Improvement Council from the perspective of the school district, parents and citizens, teachers, the school administration, and students.

Section II provides basic information on Chapter 188 as it pertains to School Improvement Funds and councils.

Section III suggests ways to organize a School Improvement Council.

Section IV describes a process for planning and decision making.

Section V describes systematic ways of coordinating the council with existing school groups and strategies for involving the community in the council's decision making process.

Section VI presents guidelines for evaluation.

SECTION I
BENEFITS OF A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

A School Improvement Council can be a valuable asset to the school district, teachers, parents and citizens, the school administration, and the students. The following chart shows the benefits of a School Improvement Council and how the council can provide these benefits.

WHO	WHAT	HOW
	THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL:	
SCHOOL DISTRICT	• Provides a channel through which school districts can learn of school and community needs and concerns • Provides a forum to try out new ideas • Publicizes existing philosophy and programs • Influences school adminstration, the school committee, and the community at large • Provides a link to above groups • Provides leadership for program evaluation • Serves as a forceful advocate for school improvement	• Is representative of the community • Is well informed • Obtains community input • Assesses needs • Does long and short range planning • Sets priorities • Establishes goals and objectives • Indicates commitment to school improvement • Forms strong networks • Identifies community resources
TEACHERS	• Solicits greater support from parents and the community for educational programs • Provides new opportunities for creative programs and services • Provides a forum to address school concerns with parents, administration, and the community • Develops new resources for school improvement and enrichment • Enables teachers to be more forceful advocates for school improvement	

WHO	WHAT	HOW
	THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL:	
PARENTS AND CITIZENS	• Provides a method that enables parents and citizens to affect education and impact the system • Is a means for parents and citizens to become familiar with the decision making process • Provides an opportunity to get to know school staff in a context other than parent-teacher conferences • Provides an opportunity to become better informed about community process and programs	• Monitors programs • Suggests new ways of managing resources • Publicizes council role, function, and activities • Establishes open channels of communication with all education and community groups • Is open to airing and sharing constructive criticism • Provides leadership for program evaluation • Frequently evaluates council functioning
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION	• Provides a way for administration to work simultaneously with school personnel and the community at large • Provides a forum for open discussion and solution of problems • Fosters better understanding between administration, parents, and the community • Garners support for school programs through greater awareness and understanding by the community • Provides broader perspective	
STUDENTS	• Provides a vehicle to address students' needs and concerns • Improves educational services • Expands enrichment services • Improves linkage between school and community experiences • Provides leadership opportunities	

SECTION II

CHAPTER 188 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FUND GRANTS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS

Definition and Responsibility

By law, School Improvement Councils are composed of the school principal, three teachers, three parents of children in the school, one community representative, and on secondary school councils, one male and one female student. In schools with an enrollment of over 2500 students there is one additional parent, teacher, and student member for each additional 500 students.

Councils are formed voluntarily by schools that wish to take advantage of Chapter 188 School Improvement Fund grants. Councils have the authority at the building level to decide how the school improvement grants that are appropriated to their schools should be spent.

The School Improvement Fund

The School Improvement Fund has been established by law for the purpose of dispensing annual appropriations to School Improvement Councils in the form of grants. Schools that establish School Improvement Councils may apply to the Department of Education for grants that equal the number of full-time students enrolled at the school in the previous year multiplied by $10.00.

Eligibility for Grants

In Fiscal Year 1986, only schools that contained any of grades K-6 and formed councils were eligible for these grants. In FY 1987 and each fiscal year thereafter, each school containing any of grades K-12 which forms a School Improvement Council will be eligible to receive a grant.

Selection of Council Members

The amendment to Chapter 188, passed in the Fall of 1986, describes the selection process as follows:

> At each school the expenditure of said funds shall be determined exclusively by a council consisting of the school principal who shall serve as chairman; and for the first two thousand five hundred students or part thereof, three teachers, elected annually by the teachers of the building, three parents of children attending said school building chosen in elections held annually by the local parent-teacher organization under the direction of the principal of such school or, if none exists chosen by the school committee; one person appointed by the school committee; and, for school buildings containing any of the grades nine to twelve, inclusive, one male secondary student and one female secondary student attending said school building elected annually by the students of said grades. For schools with more than two thousand five hundred students there shall be one teacher, one parent, and, at school buildings containing any of the grades nine to twelve, one secondary student representative for each additional five hundred students selected in the manner above to serve on the council.

Suggestions for establishing council membership can be found in School Improvement Councils: Questions and Answers #2, published by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Relationship to the School Committee

The statute gives school committees the authority to appoint the community representative on the councils and to accept or veto School Improvement Council expenditure requests. Because School Committees set system-wide policy and goals, they can be a resource for councils. School Improvement Councils, because they are knowledgeable about individual school and community needs, can inform school committees about emerging school concerns. School Improvement Councils have a great deal of autonomy in their operation and decision making and are able to respond directly to the unique interests and concerns of their schools.

Expenditure of Funds

The statute provides fairly wide latitude within state law regarding the kinds of expenditures which can be made with School Improvement Fund grants.

The money may be used as follows:

> to establish innovative academic programs, expanded services to students, purchase of instructional equipment, alternative education programs, cultural education programs, community or parental involvement programs, business and education partnership programs, staff training, or for any other purposes consistent with the intent of this section. (MGL, Chapter 188, Section 51, 1985)

The grants may not be used for:

> current operating costs, supplies, utilities, existing building and equipment maintenance, existing staff salaries and wages, or to supplant current school costs. (MGL, Chapter 188, Section 51, 1985)

When the Director of the Bureau of Data Collection and Processing in the Department of Education receives certification from a superintendent indicating that a School Improvement Council has been formed, an allocation from the School Improvement Fund is deposited with the city, town, or regional school treasurer. These funds are available to the council for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Legal and Reporting Requirements

Councils must abide by the open meeting law which requires that meetings are open to the public and that the time, date, and location of the meetings is posted with the clerk of the city or town at least 48 hours in advance, including Saturdays but not Sundays and legal holidays. Councils are also governed by the state's auditing procedures and statutes requiring disclosure to the public of records and documents that are kept by the council. Information on these laws and procedures can be obtained from the superintendent of schools or the city or town counsel.

The legislation also states that councils must annually submit a complete and detailed report of expenditures of grant funds to the commissioner of education by the end of the school year. In the spring of each year a survey is sent to the principal of each school that has established a School

Improvement Council. This survey requests information for the legislatively mandated report on council expenditures and a summary of council activities to be used:

- to facilitate the sharing of effective council practices.
- to develop training and assistance programs that will be helpful to councils.
- to assess the long-term impact that council legislation is having on school reform.
- to report to the legislature and the Department of Education on the uses of School Improvement Council Funds.

SECTION III

ORGANIZING A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

Convening the First Meeting

The principal, as the chair of the council, convenes the first meeting. At this meeting, members should take time to review the requirements of the statute, discuss the purpose of the council, and define their role as council members. As with all new groups, council members need time to ask questions, express their ideas, listen to and become acquainted with each other, and develop a sense of the council's purpose and mission.

Orienting Members

When council representatives have a good working knowledge of the school, they will be better able to make decisions regarding it. Therefore, an orientation to the policies, procedures, and programs of the school is helpful to new council members with updates on the information provided as needed. Council member orientation sessions might include:

1. Oral and written presentations by school staff
2. Distribution of school documents (budget, handbooks, policies, etc.)
3. Informational visits to councils in neighboring schools
4. Training workshops offered by school staff, university, or community institutions and organizations
5. Discussion of the roles of other school groups, such as the faculty senate, parent-teacher organization, student government, etc.
6. Information about national, state, or local associations which relate to councils
7. Information about Chapter 188 legislation

Understanding Roles

Group cohesiveness can be increased if members understand their individual roles and the relationship of their council to other

governing/advisory bodies in the school and the school system. Members may want to "brainstorm" their expectations regarding the role of the council, share the impressions and information they have gathered, and develop a public statement about primary responsibilities.

Creating Operating Guidelines

Councils operate more smoothly if members develop operating guidelines which inform council members and the community about the council's mission or purpose, structure, and procedures. These guidelines should be periodically reviewed and made available to the public and new members.

Council guidelines may include the following:

- Purpose or mission statement
- Membership list
- Meeting times
- Names of sub-committees and their chairs
- Meeting policy (frequency and quorums)
- Decision making procedures

Planning the Agenda

The agenda for each meeting is usually developed by the chairperson in consultation with the other council members. Also, it is common to solicit suggestions at the end of a meeting for items to be discussed at the next meeting. The following suggestions can contribute to effective agendas:

- State the overall purpose of the meeting as the opening statement of the agenda.
- Group the "fast" items at the beginning or end of the agenda; put the "slower" or more complex items in the middle.
- Put an assigned time beside each agenda item.
- Have realistic time lines.

Scheduling Meetings

Councils may find it helpful to decide ahead of time how many meetings they will have during the year. Setting a schedule saves having this discussion at each meeting and allows members to avoid scheduling personal and professional commitments that conflict with meetings of the council.

Conducting Effective Meetings

Council meetings can be productive, interesting, and enjoyable. Some group facilitation techniques that could be useful for the chairperson or facilitator to develop are suggested below.

Giving Information

- State and get agreement on the purpose of the meeting and the agenda to be covered.
- Propose tasks or goals.
- Define the problem. State the problem like a problem, without assessing blame.
- Raise underlying issues, problems, and concerns that may be on members' minds.
- Present problems and issues to the group - not answers.
- Present ideas on how to break problems into smaller workable pieces.
- Provide guidance when it may be time to move on to the next problem or agenda item.

Requesting Information

- Ask for expressions of feeling. "How do you feel about that decision, John?"
- Seek suggestions.
- Let the group know when someone has been interrupted. Ask the person to finish. "I think we've cut Brenda off. Did you finish what you wanted to say?"
- Repeat fragments of thoughts that are shared and ask if the person could develop the idea further.

Facilitation

- Make the agenda available for everyone - on newsprint, chalkboard, or handouts.
- Begin and end meetings on time.
- Recognize questions or comments from all participants and encourage all members to participate in discussions.
- Allow "productive silences."
- Listen actively.
- Focus on hearing others' ideas rather than stating your own.
- Ensure that the atmosphere is supportive, open, and non-threatening so that creative thinking will be encouraged, differences explored, and a variety of problem-solving techniques employed.
- Follow the agreed upon decision making process.
- Keep the group focused on the topic.
- Summarize what less active or less verbal members have said. "Your feeling is that...."
- At the end of each meeting, ask the group to set objectives for the next meeting, review the action steps of that particular meeting, and reiterate the work commitments and deadlines agreed upon.

SECTION IV

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Needs Assessment Process

Many councils find it useful to gather information from various members of the school community before they make funding decisions. Needs assessments help councils acquire information which can be employed to make constructive decisions about the use of the School Improvement Funds. The following steps are included in a model needs assessment process:

- Identify groups and individuals to be included in the assessment.
- Collect information using questionnaires or by surveying or talking with these constituents. Use school data such as attendance, dropout rates, and math and reading scores, if appropriate.
- Analyze the data.
- Determine the needs and rank them in order of their urgency or importance.
- "Test" the priorities by asking the school community to evaluate the rank ordered list of needs.
- Request proposals from the school community which address the priorities.
- Hold public forums to allow individuals or groups to present their proposals.
- Discuss proposals and evaluate them according to the priority areas and the statutory guidelines.

Obviously, this process is only one of many that a council might use; steps can be adapted or modified to fit individual council or community circumstances.

Decision Making Process

At every step in the planning process, the council will be called upon to make decisions. There are a number of ways in which decisions can be made, as

described in the chart below. Councils should consider the pros and cons of each method and then select the one which seems most appropriate. Many councils formalize their decision making procedures when they develop their operating guidelines.

METHODS OF DECISION MAKING

PROCESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Authoritarian - one member makes the decisions; other members acquiesce.	• decisions can be made quickly • helpful in times of emergency when strong leadership may be necessary	• implementers may disagree and sabotage the decision • does not encourage involvement and commitment • members may become angry, apathetic, resistant, or alienated • does not build decision making capacity in the organization
Majority Rule - one person, one vote; majority vote wins.	• decisions can be made quickly • process is simple and straight forward • power of the majority supports the decision	• minority may feel alienated and sabotage the decision • does not encourage the participation of all members • may encourage the formation of power blocs • sets up a win-lose situation
Consensus - members discuss and negotiate an issue, formulating a decision that everyone can "live with."	• encourages creative solutions to problems • builds trust and commitment • generates information and clarifies issues • implementation is easy because all parties support the decision • decentralizes responsibility • sets up a "win-win" situation	• can be time consuming • leader needs to be skilled in order to manage process • process can stalemate if conflicts are not resolved effectively

If councils decide to use the consensus method, members may need training in communication skills, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. Although building consensus takes time, the time needed to reach consensus will decrease as the group's skill level increases.

Using Funds Creatively

Councils will undoubtedly have different philosophies about the uses of their grants. Some councils may fund several short-term projects; others may invest in long-range educational programs or services. Some councils may use their money for one large project while others may want to support several smaller projects. Funds may also be used as "seed" money to encourage, for example, business or community groups to provide matching or supplementary funds for special programs. Larger schools might want to set up a competitive grant application process within the school itself. Two schools may each vote to contribute their monies toward the same purpose, such as purchasing equipment to be shared or bringing a cultural or educational resource to their schools.

Long-Range Implications of Funding Decisions

Councils should consider the long-range implications of their funding decisions. For example, will several small projects, funded in the first year, require funding the second year? Will the programs be discontinued in the second year or are there other resources available to continue them? Is it likely that a large project, funded for one year, will be integrated into the regular school program in succeeding years? Councils need to think about the implications of decisions and attempt to build capacity within schools rather than funding "one-shot" programs which will not be continued.

Planning for the Future

Assessing the needs of the school by communicating with the school community is an on-going process. As school-council relationships are built and strengthened, all concerned may want to begin to plan for the future of the school.

To implement this planning, some schools have established task forces which identify and assess a number of long-range planning processes that are currently being used by school systems and business organizations. Many of these planning strategies help members to create a "vision" of the organization. By asking people to think, imagine, or dream about the school they would like to see at some point in the future, they create a "shared vision" that produces long-term direction for the school. Most of these long-range planning strategies are somewhat complex and depend upon the members' knowledge about and commitment to the school. Councils which have had at least a year of experience may want to consider these approaches, which generally are more effective when guided by people who specialize in the planning process.

SECTION V

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

Coordinating the School Improvement Council with Other Groups

In some schools the creation of a School Improvement Council will require discussion and understanding of the council's "boundaries" and how it interacts with other groups already in existence in the school or the school system. Such coordination will help to ensure that various groups within the school do not exist in isolation from each other, duplicate efforts, or develop conflicting programs.

When groups within a school or a school system collaborate with each other and the school supports rather than hinders this cooperation, it is more likely that common goals will be achieved. Schools have developed several ways for coordinating School Improvement Councils with existing governing and advisory structures, as the following suggestions indicate:

- Organize the School Improvement Council as an umbrella organization with non-voting representation from other councils and committees in the school or school district.
- Develop a system of councils and committees which has overlapping representation for coordination and collaboration of activities.
- Organize the School Improvement Council as a subcommittee of an umbrella group.
- Establish communication between the School Improvement Council and existing councils through designated liaison people.

Using Subcommittees

Subcommittees provide good opportunities to increase the involvement and utilize particular interests or talents of council members and other interested people. Subcommittees, which may be ad hoc or on-going, usually are formed to address issues which are limited in scope or to undertake tasks which involve detail work. Members volunteer or are appointed and may come

from the council or the school community-at-large, although each sub-committee should have at least one council member representative. Sub-committees elect or appoint chairs who report regularly to the council. Below are examples of topics for sub-committees that would be relevant to council concerns:

- Council training
- Needs Assessment/Survey
- Communication
- Expenditure research

Community Outreach and Public Relations Ideas

Maintaining clear communication with committees, individuals, and the community-at-large is a continuous process. Councils communicate with personnel in the school system, human service agencies, higher education institutions, businesses, and other key individuals. Communication with professional organizations and associations, such as the teachers associations, school volunteers, and student and parent groups, can also be an excellent way of obtaining resource information.

Communication may take many forms:

- Talks, presentations, newsletters, brochures, flyers, pamphlets, logos, decals, written reports, and surveys
- Press releases to local media such as newspapers, radio, and television
- Minutes of meetings available to the public and mailed to individuals and groups
- Joint meetings, discussions, and projects with groups and individuals
- Recruitment of "outside" members for subcommittees

It is important to use established channels of communication. Information to be disseminated in the community should always be approved first by council members and then provided to the appropriate individuals in the school and the community.

SECTION VI

EVALUATION

Evaluation can be either formal or informal. Informal evaluation methods include oral comments and simple written assessments at the end of meetings or periodically throughout the year. Formal approaches range from questionnaires to studies conducted by outside professional evaluators.

Designing an evaluation, formal or informal, usually includes the following steps:

- Reviewing the goals
- Determining the evaluation method/instrument (formal/informal, oral/written)
- Deciding who will conduct the evaluation
- Administering the evaluation instruments and collecting the data
- Preparing, reviewing, and distributing an evaluation report
- Sharing a summary of the data with those who participated in the evaluation

Evaluation Focus

When conducting an evaluation, School Improvement Councils should focus on four major areas:

- Process: How well is the group functioning?
- Product: How well are the funded programs meeting their goals and objectives?
- Membership/Communication: How representative is the council and how well is it involving the community?
- Resource management: How effective are the funding decisions?

Process: In evaluating the process of the council, it is useful to ask the following questions:

- Are group guidelines adequate and effective?
- How well does the council function in regard to:

  group cohesiveness

  motivation and morale

  decision making

  clarity about the purpose of the council and the role of council members

Product: In evaluating products the council should address these questions:

- To what extent have programs met their goals and objectives?
- Were the expectations realistic? Have programs produced any unintended benefits?
- What long-term impact does the program have? How does the program contribute to student achievement?
- How do programs or services contribute to school improvement?

Membership/Communication: The following questions are useful when evaluating membership and communication:

- How can important constituencies have better access to the council?
- Does the council reflect the racial/ethnic composition of the community? If not, what steps could be taken to improve council representation?
- Are the council's public relations or communication strategies effective?
- What steps could be taken to solicit more involvement of the community in the decisions and the activities of the council?
- Are students active members? Do they receive the support they need?

Resource Management: The following questions should be asked about the use of the School Improvement Funds:

- Do programs address the priority needs of the community?
- Are programs growing and is there a plan for integrating the programs into the regular educational services of the school?
- Have community resources been fully investigated? Are there cost effective ways to support funded programs already in operation so that new programs or services can be funded?

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

We hope this handbook provides you with information for establishing and managing a School Improvement Council. The Appendices include additional resources and checklists to assist you further in the development of your council.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biagi, Bob. Working Together: A Manual For Helping Groups Work More Effectively. Amherst, MA: Citizen Involvement Training Project, University of Massachusetts, 1978.

Carney, J. and Chrispeels, J. Schools and Communities Working Together for Effective Schools and Stronger Communities. San Diego County Office of Education, January 6, 1984.

Edmonds, Ronald. "Programs of School Improvement: An Overview." Educational Leadership. December, 1982, Vol. 40, No. 3, P. 4-11.

Edmonds, Ronald. "Some Schools Work and More Can." Social Policy. March-April, 1979, p. 28-31.

Hall, G., Rutherford, W., Hord, S., and Hulig, L. "Effects of Three Principal Styles on School Improvement." Educational Leadership. February, 1984, p. 22-29.

Johnson, M. and Slotnik, J. "Parent Participation in the Schools: Are the Benefits Worth the Burden?" Phi Delta Kappan. February, 1985, p. 430-433.

Liberman, A. and Miller, L. "Synthesis of Research on Improving Schools." Educational Leadership. April, 1981, Vol. 38, November 7, p. 583-586.

Louchks-Horsely, S. and Hergert, L. F. An Action Guide to School Improvement. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD/The Network, Inc., March, 1985.

McCormack-Larkin, M. "Insights Into the School Effectiveness Process." The Effective School Report. March, 1984, Vol., 2, No. 3.

Massachusetts Department of Education
An Informational Handbook for Organizing and Operating a Community Advisory Council.

Massachusetts Education Advisory Councils: Structure and Purpose.

School Improvement Councils: Questions and Answers #2 (Revised Edition).

These publications are available by contacting:
Susan Freedman, Coordinator
Community Education Office
Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services
Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock St.
Quincy, MA 02169.

Raywid, M. A. "Restoring School Efficacy by Giving Parents a Choice." Educational Leadership. November, 1980, p. 134-146.

Stewig, J. W. "Reaching for Links that Foster Strength and Stability." Phi Delta Kappan. May, 1985, p. 640-42.

Zerchykov, R. and Davies, D., with Chrispeels, J. Leading the Way: State Mandates for School Advisory Councils in California, Florida and South Carolina. Boston, MA: Institute for Responsive Education, November, 1980.

APPENDIX A

AN ACT IMPROVING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

CHAPTER 188 OF THE ACTS OF 1985

as amended by

Chapter 414 of the Acts of 1986

SECTION 2. Chapter 10 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 35E the following section:

Section 35F. There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate fund, to be known as the School Improvement Fund, to improve the quality of education at the school building level. Said fund shall consist of all monies appropriated therefor in each fiscal year and shall be allocated and expended pursuant to the provisions of section fifty-one of chapter fifteen. Notwithstanding the provisions of section nine B of chapter twenty-nine, all monies appropriated to said fund shall be made available for distribution upon appropriation.

Section 51. The board shall allocate such funds as are appropriated to the School Improvement Fund, established under the provisions of section thirty-five F of chapter ten, to each school building containing any of the grades from kindergarten to six, inclusive, in the fiscal year nineteen hundred and eighty-six and in every school building containing any of the grades from kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, in the fiscal year nineteen hundred and eighty-seven and each fiscal year thereafter, which has filed information set forth in section forty-nine of chapter fifteen in the following manner: an amount of money equal to the total number of full-time equivalent students in grades kindergarten to six, or kindergarten to twelve in attendance there during the preceding school year multiplied by ten dollars in the fiscal year nineteen hundred and eighty-six and each fiscal year thereafter.

Funds appropriated by the board shall be deposited with the town, city or regional treasurer in a separate account for expenditure by the councils pursuant to this section.

The proceeds of the fund shall be used, at the school building level, to establish innovative academic programs, expanded services to students, purchase of instructional equipment, alternative education programs, cultural education programs, community or parental involvement programs, business and education partnership programs, staff training, or for any other purposes consistent with the intent of this section.

Such funds shall not be used for current operating costs, supplies, utilities, existing building and equipment maintenance, existing staff, salaries and wages, or to supplant current school costs.

Section 51 of Chapter 15 of the General Laws, as appearing in section 6 of chapter 188 of the acts of 1985, is hereby amended by striking out the fifth paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:

At each school the expenditure of said funds shall be determined exclusively by a council consisting of the school principal who shall serve as chairman; and for the first two thousand five hundred students or part thereof, three teachers, elected annually by the teachers of the building, three parents of children attending said school building chosen in elections held annually by the local parent-teacher organization under the direction of the principal of such school or, if none exists chosen by the school committee; one person appointed by the school committee; and, for school buildings containing any of the grades nine to twelve, inclusive, one male secondary student and one female secondary student attending said school building elected annually by the students of said grades. For schools with more than two thousand five hundred students there shall be one teacher, one teacher, one parent, and, at school buildings containing any of the grades

nine to twelve, one secondary student representative for each additional five hundred students selected in the manner above to serve on the council. (MGL, Chapter 414, Section 1, 1986)

To the extent possible said councils shall be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the school building and community.

All decisions of the local school improvment council regarding the expenditure of funds under this section shall be submitted to the school committee who may veto same by a majority recorded vote. If no such vote is rendered by the committee within thirty days of receipt of said decision, it shall be assumed to be approved. Should the school committee veto a decision of the local school improvement council, said matter shall not be re-submitted for a period of one year from said veto. Decisions of the local school improvment council shall not be subject to chapter one hundred and fifty E, provided, however, that such expenditures or decisions of said councils shall not be in violation of local collective bargaining contracts in existence at the time of passage of this act; and provided, however, that decisions of the local school improvement council regarding matters brought before it, including, but not limited to the expenditure of funds under this section, shall not interfere with any power, authority or statutory obligation lawfully vested in any school committee.

All members of the school improvment council shall be subject to the provisions of chapter two hundred and sixty-eight A and shall not be subject to the provisions of chapter two hundred and sixty-eight B. The operation of the councils shall be subject to the provisions of section eleven A, one-half of chapter thirty A, sections thirty-five to forty-six A, inclusive, of chapter forty-four and section ten of chapter sixty-six.

The council shall annually submit a complete and detailed report of expenditures of funds under this section to the commissioner of education by the end of the school year.

The department shall prepare and distribute to each school superintendent and school improvement council a report specifying the use of school improvement funds statewide.

APPENDIX B

EFFECTIVE MEETING CHECKLIST

	YES	NO
Agenda prepared	____	____
Agenda distributed to members before meeting	____	____
Room set up comfortably before meeting begins	____	____
Refreshments available	____	____
Meeting begins on time	____	____
Purpose of the meeting and outcomes are stated and agreed upon	____	____
All members participate in discussion	____	____
Group follows agreed upon decision making process	____	____
Items on agenda are covered	____	____
Action items and decisions made are reviewed at the end of meeting	____	____
Work commitments and timelines are reviewed	____	____
Group gives input on next meeting's objectives	____	____
Meeting ends on time	____	____

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Dear Parents (Teachers, Students, or Community Members):

We would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to answer the questions below. The "Z" School has received $3,000 from the School Improvement Fund which is part of the new Public School Improvement Act enacted by the legislature in the summer of 1985. To become eligible for this money our school formed a council composed of the principal, three teachers who have been elected by the teachers in the building, three parents who been elected by the PTA, (two students elected by the student body), and one community representative appointed by the school committee. This council is to decide how the grant will be spent and is writing to you to ask for any suggestions or ideas you may have. The guidelines for spending the money are as follows:

- Establish innovative academic programs
- Expand services to students
- Purchase instructional equipment
- Promote alternative education programs
- Promote community or parental involvement programs
- Promote cultural education programs
- Promote business/education partnership programs
- Improve staff training
- Other consistent uses

Please answer the questions below so that we will have your input on how to use this money to improve our school!

Return this form to the school office by December 2. Thank you.

1. What are the strengths of our school in the following areas? Please list one or two strengths in each area:

   a. curriculum _____

   _____

   b. extra-curricular activities _____

   _____

   c. school facilities _____

   _____

2. What are the needs of the school in these areas? Please list needs in order of importance:

a. curriculum	b. extra-curricular activities	c. facilities
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

3. If resources could be used to improve the school in only <u>one</u> area, what would you recommend? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE PROPOSAL APPLICATION FORM

TO: Teachers, Parents, Community Members, and Students

FROM: The School Improvement Council of "Z" School

RE: Requests for School Improvement Proposals

The "Z" School will receive funding under the Public School Improvement Act, Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985. These funds are to be used for the following purposes:

- Establish innovative academic programs
- Expand services to students
- Purchase instructional equipment
- Promote alternative education programs
- Promote community or parental involvement programs
- Promote cultural education programs
- Promote business/education partnership programs
- Improve staff training
- Other consistent uses

The School Improvement Council will be reviewing suggestions and ideas for using the grant money that meet the above guidelines. We would like to encourage members of our community to submit <u>one-page</u> proposals for programs or services that they would like the council to consider. Please include the following information:

A. The name of the individual or group submitting the proposal

B. A brief description of the proposed program or service

C. Cost

D. How the program or service will benefit students and the school

Send proposals to the school office by <u>November 15</u>. Thank you.

APPENDIX E
COUNCIL EVALUATION FORM

What is the mission of our School Improvement Council?

_____
_____
_____

Do we have written council guidelines? yes___ no___
If yes, what modifications do we want to make for next year?

_____
_____
_____

Is our council representative of the local community? yes___ no___
If yes, what can be done to increase community representation?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What does our council do? (Check those that apply.)

____ Orients members
____ Schedules meetings in advance
____ Develops agendas for meetings
____ Gathers information about school needs
____ Requests funding proposals from the school community
____ Sets school improvement goals or outcomes
____ Develops a system for making decisions (consensus, majority vote, etc.)
____ Publicizes council activities and funded programs
____ Monitors funded programs and services
____ Attends training sessions which relate to council effectiveness
____ Evaluates funded programs
____ Evaluates the council

What written materials have been developed by the Council?

_____
_____
_____

What are the strengths of the council?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What areas need improvement?_____
_____
_____

How will these areas be addressed?_____
_____
_____

Is the community aware and supportive of the School Improvment Council?
yes ____ no ____

How can our community outreach activities be improved?

_____
_____
_____

What cooperative efforts have we had with other school groups?

_____
_____

How can we strengthen these efforts?_____
_____
_____

What are the council's school improvement goals for next year?

_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX F
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS
FY 1987 REPORT

SCHOOL SYSTEM _____ SCHOOL _____ GRADE LEVEL _____

PRINCIPAL _____ SCHOOL PHONE _____

Chapter 188, the Public School Improvement Act, requires school improvement councils to submit an annual report. This reporting form is sent to all school principals, as chairpeople of their councils, to comply with this requirement.

Please spend a few minutes reflecting on your council and its activities this year. We are interested in learning about your council so we can (1) share with other councils your successful and innovative practices and programs, (2) develop training and other assistance in response to councils' requests for services for next year, and (3) gather data that will allow us to assess the long-term impact that Chapter 188 is having on school reform. We very much appreciate your participation in this survey.

A. Council Structure and Internal Operation

1. How many meetings did the council have? ____

2. What was the average number of council members in attendance at each meeting? ____

3. Which categories describe the school committee appointed member of the council? Check all that apply:

___ Parent
___ School administrator or teacher
___ Senior citizen
___ Resident with no children in the public schools
___ Educator
___ Student
___ Businessperson
___ Community representative
___ Town meeting member
___ Town official
___ Other

4. How many members of your council were from each of the following racial/ethnic groups?

___ Asian
___ Black
___ Hispanic
___ Native American
___ White

5. Did the council receive an orientation to the school's programs, procedures, and policies? Check all that apply:

___ Verbal presentations on school programs, procedures, or policies
___ Written materials on school programs, procedures, or policies
___ Copies of school handbooks, etc.
___ Presentations by teachers on special programs
___ Written information on student achievement
___ Specific information on school problems or needs
___ No orientation
___ Other

6. Did the council develop procedural guidelines for its own functioning?
   Yes __ No __

7. What was the council's decision making procedure?
   Majority vote __
   Consensus __
   Other __

B. Information Gathering and Decision Making

8. With what other parent/community groups did the SIC communicate or seek to coordinate its efforts?

   ___ PTA, PTO, or other home/school organization
   ___ Parent or community advisory councils
   ___ School-business partnership committees
   ___ Did not contact other groups
   ___ Other

9. Did the council seek input from the community in its information gathering process? Check all that apply:

   ___ Questionnaires or surveys
   ___ Subcommittees
   ___ Open meetings
   ___ Did not seek input
   ___ Other

10. For what purposes has the council continued to meet after it made its funding decisions? Check all that apply:

   ___ To monitor the spending of the grant
   ___ To evaluate the effectiveness of the uses of the grant
   ___ To research program ideas for the next year's grant
   ___ To familiarize members with school programs
   ___ Has not continued to meet
   ___ Other

C. Communication and Outcomes

11. Please indicate your council's expenditures, listing the amount spent in the appropriate category:

   Innovative academic programs _____
   Expanded services to students _____
   Purchase of instructional equipment _____
   Alternative education programs _____
   Cultural education programs _____
   Community or parent involvement programs _____
   Business and education partnership programs _____
   Staff training _____
   Other purposes (Please specify.) _____

12. In what ways did the council communicate about its activity to the school and the community? Check all that apply:

___ School newspaper
___ Letters home to parents
___ Local newspaper
___ Did not communicate
___ Other

13. In what ways has the council had an impact on the school/community? Check all that apply:

___ Improved instructions for students
___ More enrichment opportunities for students
___ Improved school staff morale
___ Increased resources for the school
___ Increased communication with parents and school community
___ Better intercultural understanding
___ Increased communication with school committee
___ Increased participation by parents in the life of the school
___ Other ways (Please specify.) _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We look forward to sharing the results with you. Please return this form by June 30, 1987 to:

Office of Executive Planning
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169

Written Documents (Optional)

We would be interested in seeing any written documents you have developed in the course of your council activity, such as:

- procedural guidelines for the council
- handbooks for council members
- needs assessments
- public relations materials
- descriptions of council-sponsored programs

We also would be interested in receiving a listing of the specific items on which you used your grant.

This information will be used as a basis for our development of publications and conferences which will highlight school improvement council model programs and practices. We would be most appreciative if you would share this information with us by sending it to the address below:

Susan Freedman, Coordinator of Community Education
Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
REGIONAL EDUCATION CENTER CONTACT PEOPLE
FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS

Central Massachusetts Regional Education Center
Chuck Radlo or Lynne Simonds
Route 140, Beaman Street
West Boylston, MA 01583
(617) 835-6266

Greater Boston Regional Education Center
Ed Glasser or Mamie Jones
75 Acton Street
Arlington, MA 02174
(617) 641-4870

Greater Springfield Regional Education Center
Pat Cote
88 Massasoit Avenue
West Springfield, MA 01089
(413) 739-7271

Northeast Regional Education Center
Nancy Dube
219 North Street
North Reading, MA 01846
(617) 664-5723

Northwest Regional Education Center
Ron Areglado
Mark Hopkins Hall
Church Street
North Adams, MA 01247
(413) 664-4511

Southeast Regional Education Center
John Geovanis
Lakeville State Hospital
P.O. Box 29
Middleboro, MA 02346
(617) 947-1231